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DE RUEHOS #0173/01 0960638  
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R 060638Z APR 09  
FM AMCONSUL LAGOS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0672  
INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0277  
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE USD WASHDC  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF EDUCATION WASHDC  
RHMCSUU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAHL/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHDC  
RUEHC/DEPT OF INTERIOR WASHDC  
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC  
RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHDC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

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SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE PASS USAID FOR NFREEMAN, GBERTOLIN  
DOC FOR 3317/ITA/OA/KBURRESS  
DOC FOR 3310/USFC/OIO/ANESA/DHARRIS  
DOC FOR USPTO-PAUL SALMON  
DOJ FOR MARIE-FLORE KOUAME  
TREASURY FOR RHALL, DPETERS  
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER  
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN, MSTUCKART, JEDWARDS  
STATE PASS TDA FOR LFITTS, PMARIN

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [SENV](#) [ECON](#) [ETTC](#) [ETRDPOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NO SYSTEMS IN PLACE FOR COPING WITH E-WASTE

Ref A: 08Abuja 2143 B: 08Lagos 461

¶1. (U) Summary: The March 7 edition of THISDAY, a widely read newspaper in Nigeria, reported that extensive trading in e-waste in Lagos is a source of revenue for growing numbers of the unemployed. It noted that there is inaccurate data on e-waste in Nigeria but that a Seattle based environmental organization estimated that 500 shipping containers loaded with e-waste enter Nigeria each month through the Lagos port. Some government officials recognize the health problems generated by e-waste (used electronics such as televisions, computers etc.); the Director of the Lagos State Waste Management Authority pegged Nigeria's high cancer rate at least in part to the prevalence of e-waste. (Note: Post has reported on anecdotal evidence of rising cancer rates from oil spills in the Niger Delta, but can find no hard public health data to support the claim of rising cancer rates. End Note) As a signatory to the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, Nigeria is one of four countries slated to have a regional center to develop projects and methods to transfer technology to solve the e-waste problem, but no center has yet been established, the newspaper reported. Federal and state agencies say Nigeria lacks a legal framework with which to tackle the problem. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On March 7, 2009, THISDAY, a Lagos newspaper, published an article titled "Thriving on E-Waste". According to the paper, imported e-waste from the West and Asia, some of it rejected by other countries, is processed in Lagos markets. The article defined e-waste as used electronics intended for reuse, resale, recycling or disposal, including old computers, televisions, compact disc players, digital video disc, broken monitors, obsolete circuit boards, short-circuited transistors, mobile phone handsets and microwave ovens. Locally, this e-waste is called "tokunbo" or "used products coming from abroad" in the Yoruba language

Source of Revenue for Unemployed

13. (U) E-waste is a source of revenue for growing numbers of unemployed youths in Lagos. THISDAY quoted a trader as saying "With this business, I have trained my children and myself. I have two university graduates in my immediate family, funded with money made from the sale of these "tokunbo" products. I don't really understand why people are now crying foul over these items. Most of our rich people today had at one time or the other made use of these obsolete items. People should please let us be."

No Accurate Data on E-waste  
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14. (U) According to THISDAY, Nigeria has no accurate data on the amount of e-waste imported into the country nor has the government developed risk-management measures for its handling. The paper cited a report by Basel Action Network (BAN), a Seattle-based environmental group, which found that an estimated 500 containers, each containing on average 800 monitors or CPUs, the equivalent of 400,000 second-hand computers or monitors, enter Lagos each month; about 75 per cent of these electronic products were considered junk. (Note: Post verified this information from the website (www.ban.org) report titled "The Digital Dump, Exporting Re-use and Abuse to Africa, 24 October 2005. End Note)

Health and Environmental Problems from E-Waste  
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15. (U) The article also quoted Nigerian environmentalists and medical practitioners about the serious health and environmental problems caused by exposure to the toxic chemicals in e-waste. The Managing Director of Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA), Mr. Ola Oresanya was quoted as saying that e-waste in Lagos "is a time

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bomb. Most of the e-waste has metal, mercury and lead. They are very dangerous and they are carcinogenic. And cancer rate is so high in Nigeria today. This is traceable to some of this items imported into the country." (Comment: post has reported on anecdotal evidence of rising cancer rates from oil spills in the Niger Delta, but can find no hard public health data to support the claim of rising cancer rates. End comment).

Nigeria is Basel Convention Signatory  
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16. (U) Nigeria signed the Basel Convention on the control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Waste March 15, 1990 and ratified it on March 13, 1991, the newspaper said. The Convention protects human health and the environment against the adverse effects resulting from the generation, management, trans-boundary movements and disposal of hazardous and other waste. According to the THISDAY article, the Basel Convention established four Regional Coordinating Centers to develop regional projects, and deliver training and technology transfer for the implementation of the convention. Nigeria has been identified as the location for one of the centers, but the government has not moved forward to establish it, the newspaper reported. The article urges the National Assembly, government agencies and environmental groups to establish the center.

Agencies Lack Authority to Regulate E-waste  
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17. (U) The Nigerian government has not yet passed a comprehensive law to regulate the importation and disposal of e-waste, the article pointed out. Therefore, federal agencies lack authority to regulate e-waste standards. The Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) told THISDAY that it does not regulate the standards of used items. However, SON has established a surveillance unit to monitor harmful e-waste products, and is working with Customs and other government agencies to deal with the problem. The Nigerian Customs Service (NCS), however, told THISDAY that it has no regulatory powers to determine the standards of goods imported into the country.

FG Seeks Solutions to E-waste  
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18. (U) Though there is no legislation or effective policies to regulate the importation and disposal of e-waste, some agencies and ministries are calling on the federal government to seek solutions to e-waste in Nigeria. Custom's Public Relations Officer, Adewale Adeniyi, told THISDAY "I think there is need for the Federal Government to put in place a new policy to tackle this problem. The NCS is ready at all time to implement such policy to save our environment". According to PUNCH ON THE WEB, published on March 3, 2009, The Director General of the National Environmental Standards, Regulations Enforcement Agency, Dr. Ngeria Benebo, promised on February 23 that the agency would establish standards for such products entering the country. LAWMA Director Oresanya told THISDAY that Lagos State government should make use of the treaty to trace e-waste items in Lagos to the originating countries and to hold them responsible under the said treaty. In remarks to the newspaper, Minister of Environment John Odey, predicted major health crises in developing countries unless stringent measures are taken to stop dumping of toxic waste in their territories, but stopped short of saying what measures, if any, the Nigerian government would take.

19. (U) This cable has been cleared with Embassy Abuja.